

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-07
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 EB-08 SIL-01 LAB-04 OMB-01 TRSE-00 /073 W
-----074771 122227Z /63

R 121835Z OCT 77
FM AMEMBASSY ROME
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7748
INFO AMCONSUL FLORENCE
AMCONSUL GENOA
AMCONSUL MILAN
AMCONSUL NAPLES
AMCONSUL PALERMO

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: DC LEADERS ADDRESS PROBLEM OF DISAFFECTION AMONG
DC PARLIAMENTARIANS

SUMMARY. A CHRISTIAN DEMOCRAT PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR, OCT. 6-8, PROVIDED THE OCCASION FOR DC LEADERS TO ADDRESS THE DISAFFECTION THAT HAS DEVELOPED AMONG SUBSTANTIAL NUMBERS OF PARLIAMENTARIANS, MOSTLY FIRST AND SECOND-TERMERS, OVER THE LEADERSHIP STYLE AND POLICIES OF THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY LEADERSHIP. WITH LEGISLATIVE COMPROMISES INCREASINGLY WORKED OUT DIRECTLY WITH THE OTHER PARTIES, MANY DC PARLIAMENTARIANS COMPLAIN THEY ARE NOT CONSULTED ON IMPORTANT ISSUES AND ARE RELEGATED TO THE SIDELINES. IRRITATION OVER THE LEADERSHIP'S HANDLING OF THE POSTPONEMENT OF LOCAL ELECTIONS WAS FOLLOWED BY WIDESPREAD INTERNAL OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTROVERSIAL PENSION REFORM, FORCING ANDREOTTI TO WITHDRAW THE PLAN ON OCTOBER 7. ADDRESSING THE DC PARLIAMENTARIANS, ANDREOTTI REMINDED THEM THAT THE MINORITY GOVERNMENT FORMULA DOES NOT PERMIT THE DC TO ALWAYS
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GET ITS WAQC THE "LOGIC OF REALISM" HAD TO BE ACCEPTED. PARTY SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI ALSO LECTURED THE PARLIAMENTARIANS ON THE NEED TO AVOID PUBLIC DISPLAYS OF DISUNITY. WHILE THE LEADERSHIP HAS HAD TO HEED THE GROWING DISSATISFACTION OF MANY DC PARLIAMENTARIANS, NO ONE SERIOUSLY CONTESTS ANDREOTTI'S GOVERNMENT OR MORO'S LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY.
END SUMMARY.

1. DC LEADERS AND PARLIAMENTARIANS MET IN ROME, OCT. 6-8, TO DISCUSS THE PARTY'S LEGISLATIVE PROGRAM AND POLICIES IN THE ALL SESSION. THE SEMINAR PROVIDED DC LEADERS AN IMPORTANT OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE DISCONTENT AND DISSATISFACTION THAT HAS DEVELOPED WITHIN THE DC PARLIAMENTARY GROUPS SINCE THE SIGNING OF THE SIX-PARTY PROGRAM ACCORD LAST JULY.

2. THE DISGRUNTLEMENT OF MANY DC PARLIAMENTARIANS STEMS FROM THE GROWING PRACTICE OF THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT AND THE MORO-ZACCAGNINI SECRETARIAT TO WORK OUT LEGISLATIVE COMPROMISES DIRECTLY WITH THE OTHER PARTIES. MANY PARLIAMENTARIANS BELIEVE THAT THEY ARE BEING INCREASINGLY RELEGATED TO THE SIDELINES ON ISSUES OF IMPORTANCE TO THEM. MOREOVER, THEY FEEL THAT THEY ARE BEING ASKED TO RUBBER-STAMP PROPOSALS THAT APPEAR UNNECESSARILY FAVORABLE TO COMMUNIST AIMS. THE DISCONTENT RECENTLY TOOK THE FORM OF AN OPEN LETTER TO PARTY SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI, SIGNED BY OVER 70 PARLIAMENTARIANS, WHICH CRITICIZED THE LEADERSHIP'S SUPPORT FOR POSTPONEMENT OF THIS FALL'S ADMINISTRATIVE ELECTIONS AS "UNJUSTIFIABLE" AND "INADMISSIBLE."

3. MAY DC PARLIAMENTARIANS FEAR THAT THEY WILL BE HIT WITH OTHER UNPLEASANT SURPRISES ON IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE MATTERS?

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LATION SUCH AS POLICE UNIONIZATION AND THE FAIR RENT BILL. THEIR CONCERNS WERE FURTHER AROUSED BY THE GOVERNMENT'S CONTROVERSIAL PLAN TO REDUCE THE PENSION FUND DEFICIT BY LOWERING THE PENSIONS TO A MAXIMUM OF 100,000 LIRE (\$115) OF THOSE WHO CONTINUED TO WORK. DIRECTLY AFFECTING, AS IT DOES, THE SELF-EMPLOYED MIDDLE-CLASS AND PENSIONED VOTER (PRIMARILY FARMERS, MERCHANTS AND ARTISANS) THAT FORMS AN IMPORTANT SEGMENT OF THE DC ELECTORATE, THE PROPOSAL (APPROVED BY THE CABINET ON SEPT. 30) AROUSED AN IMMEDIATE OUTCRY FROM THE PUBLIC AND WITHIN THE PARTY. WHILE RECOGNIZING THE NEED TO DO SOMETHING TO REDUCE SPIRALLING PENSION OUTLAYS, OPPONENTS ARGUED THAT ANOTHER WAY SHOULD BE FOUND THAT DOES NOT PLACE THE BRUNT OF THE BURDEN ON THE DC'S ELECTORATE. FOLLOWING AN URGENT CONSULTATION WITH THE DC LEADERSHIP AND TRADE UNION REPRESENTATIVES ON OCT. 7, THE GOVERNMENT AGREED TO WITHDRAW ITS PROPOSAL AND SEEK ANOTHER SOLUTION WITHIN THE BROADENED CONTEXT OF A MORE COMPLETE PENSION REFORM.

4. HAVING JUST BEEN DEFEATED BY HIS OWN PARTY ON THE PENSIONS ISSUE, PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI'S TASK IN ADDRESSING THE DC PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR ON THE FOLLOWING

DAY WAS NOT EASY. HE REMINDED HIS AUDIENCE THAT THE
CONE-PARTY MINORITY GOVERNMENT DID NOT HAVE THE
POWER TO DO WHAT IT WISHES. THE DC COULD NOT EXPECT
TO GET ALL OF ITS PROGRAM THROUGH. HE SPOKE OF THE
NEED TO ACCEPT "THE LOGIC OF REALISM" AND WARNED
OF THE DANGERS OF CONSIDERING ISSUES "IN THE ABSTRACT."
THIS DID NOT MEAN, ANDREOTTI REASSURED, THAT HIS
GOVERNMENT WOULD EVER COMPROMISE "ON THE UNDAMENTAL
IDEALS OF THE DC." FINALLY, IN AN OBVIOUS REFERENCE
TO THE PENSIONS CONTROVERSY, HE REMINED DC PARLIA-
MENTARIANS THAT IT IS BETTER TO OVERCOME ONE'S DISTASTE
AND EAT TADPOLES RATHER THAN BE FORCED LATER TO
SWALLOW TOADS. COMMENT: THIS TIME, ANDREOTTI'S SAR-
CASTIC SENSE OF HUMOR WAS MET WITH STONEY SILENCE.
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END COMMENT.

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5. PARTY SECRETARY ZACCAGNINI ALSO TOOK ADVANTAGE OF
THE SEMINAR TO LECTURE THE PARLIAMENTARIANS AGAINST THE
DANGERS OF DISUNITY AND THE NEED TO KEEP DISSENT UNDER

CONTROL. IN AN UNUSUALLY STRONG ATTACK, HE SAID THAT OPEN CONTROVERSIES (SUCH AS THE PARLIAMENTARIAN PETITION AGAINST THE ELECTION POSTPONEMENT) CAUSED "SERIOUS DAMAGE TO THE PUBLIC IMAGE AND GOOD NAME OF THE DC," AND SHOULD "NOT BE REPEATED." DISAGREEMENTS, HE SAID, SHOULD BE WORKED OUT WITHIN THE PARTY. A NATIONAL COUNCIL WOULD BE HELD "IMMINENTLY" TO DISCUSS A WIDE VARIETY OF PROBLEMS. (COBUNT: THE DC AHAS NOT HAD EVEN A DIRECTORATE MEETING SINCE LAST JULY, A FACT WHICH SOME OBSERVERS HAVE ATTRIBUTED TO THE DISSENSIONS WITHIN THE PARTY. THEY NOTE THAT THE LEADERSHIP DID NOT CON- VENE A COUNCIL MEETING OVER THE ELECTIONS POSTPONEMENT ISSUE, AS REQUESTED BY OPPONENTS OF THE PROPOSAL, AND CHOOSE RATHER TO PRESENT THE PARTY WITH A FAIT ACCOMPLI. THE CONVENING OF THE NATIONAL COUNCIL ON OCTOBER 21-23 WAS SUBSEQUENTLY ANNOUNCED. END COMMENT.

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6. SPEAKING OF THE PROGRAM ACCORD AND THE DC'S "LOYAL" COMMITMENT TO ACHIEVE ITS "LIMITED" PROVISIONS, ZACCAGNINI INTERESTINGLY FOUND IT NECESSARY TO STRESS THAT THE AGREEMENT HAD NO SECRET PROVISIONS BETWEEN THE DC AND THE PCI. "NEITHER SEPARATE PROTOCOLS NOR SECRET AGREEMENTS, DIRECT OR INDIRECT, EXIST," HE SAID. ZACCAGNINI ALSO FLATLY REJECTED THE NOTION THAT THE PCI HAD BECOME THE DC'S PRIVILEGED INTERLOCUTOR AS A RESULT OF THE ACCORD.

7. COMMENT: WHO ARE THE DISAFFECTED PARLIAMENTARIANS AND DOES THEIR DISSATISFACTION PRESENT A SERIOUS CHALLENGE TO THE ANDREOTTI GOVERNMENT OR THE MORO-ZACCAGNINI LEADERSHIP OF THE PARTY? FOR THE MOST PART, THE DISAFFECTED ARE FIRST AND SECOND-TERM MODERATES WHO SHARE A GENERATIONAL AFFINITY THAT CUTS ACROSS TRADITIONAL PARTY FACTIONAL LINES (SEE ROME 14777). THEIR COMPOSITION OFTEN VARIES WITH THE ISSUE (MANY FANFANIANI, FOR EXAMPLE, JOINED YOUNG MILAN DEPUTY USELLINI IN HIS PETITION AGAINST ELECTION POSTPONEMENT), AND THEY HAVE NOT YET COALESCED IN A SEPARATE PRESSURE GROUPING. BECAUSE OF HIS PARLIAMENTARY LEADERSHIP POSITION, HOWEVER, DEPUTY DC CHAMBER WHIP GERARDO BIANCO HAS EMERGED AS ONE OF THE MOST OUTSPOKEN LEADERS OF THE NEW INFORMAL GROUPING.

8. THE FIRST AND SECOND-TERM LGRLIAMENTARIANS ARE NOT YET READY TO CUT THEIR FORMAL TIES WITH THE POWERFUL AND INFLUENTIAL FACTIONAL WINGS WHICH STILL LARGELY CONTROL ADVANCEMENT AND SURVIVAL IN DC POLITICS. AS THE ELECTION POSTPONEMENT ISSUE DEMONSTRATED, THEY

STILL DO NOT HAVE THE COHESION OR VOTES TO TORPEDO DC
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LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES ON THEIR OWN. HOWEVER, ON
ISSUES IN WHICH THERE IS SUBSTANTIAL CONSENSUS
THROUGHOUT THE PARTY (SUCH AS THE PENSIONS PROBLEM),
THEIR INFLUENCE IS BEGINNING TO BE FELT IN CONCRETE
TERMS. THEIR DISSATISFACTION HAS ALSO REACHED SUFFICIENT
PROPORTIONS FOR ANDREOTTI AND ZACCAGNINI TO DEMONSTRATE
SERIOUS CONCERN AS INDICATED IN THE PARLIAMENTARY SEMINAR.

9. IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE, HOWEVER, TO CONCLUDE THAT THE
DISSATISFACTION EXPRESSED BY MANY DC PARLIAMENTARIANS
POSES A SERIOUS PROBLEM FOR ANDREOTTI OR THE
MORO-ZACCAGNINI LEADERSHIP. IT HAS LONG BEEN AXIOMATIC
IN THE DC THAT INTERNAL MANEUVERING AND DISSENT FLOURISHES
DURING PERIODS OF STABILITY IN THE GOVERNMENT AND PARTY
LEADERSHIP. IN PERIODS OF CRISIS, THE PARTY TRADITIONALLY
CLOSES RANKS. WHILE THE CRITICS OF ANDREOTTI ARE
MANY, NO ONE SERIOUSLY CONTESTS THE PRIME MINISTER'S
LEADERSHIP AT THIS MOMENT NOR PERCEIVES OF A BETTER
ALTERNATIVE. DESPITE DEEP MISGIVINGS, THE PROGRAM
ACCORD IS ALSO REGARDED AS A NECESSARY EVIL. IN ITS
LEGISLATIVE AND POLITICAL CALCULATIONS, HOWEVER, BOTH
THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PARTY LEADERSHIP WILL INCREASINGLY
HAVE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE GROWING DISQUIET AMONG
DC PARLIAMENTARIANS. GARDNER

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Message Attributes

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